

CENTER FOR MEDICARE ADVOCACY, INC.

1025 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW, SUITE 709

WASHINGTON, DC 20036

(202) 293-5760 FAX (202) 293-5764

www.medicareadvocacy.org

ATTORNEYS

Judith A. Stein*

Brad S. Plebani*

Margaret M. Murphy*

Pamela A. Meliso*

Gill Deford

Alfred J. Chiplin, Jr.

Toby S. Edelman

Vicki Gottlich

Patricia Nemore

Mary T. Berthelot*

Mary A. Ashkar*

Ted J. Bliman*

Abigail G. Sheehan*

ADMINISTRATOR

Carolyn S. Boyle

ASSISTANT DATA MANAGER

Shaun Harrington

September 26, 2008

OF COUNSEL

Sally Hart*

Wey-Wey Elaine Kwok*

***Admitted in other jurisdictions**

The Honorable Pete Stark
The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
United States Congress
Washington, DC

Dear Congressman Stark and Congresswoman Schakowsky:

The Center for Medicare Advocacy is pleased to support the Nursing Home Transparency and Quality of Care Improvement Act that you introduce today. The legislation is an important step forward in public efforts to improve the quality of care provided to nursing home residents nationwide.

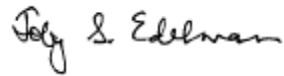
The Center calls particular attention to the bill's strengthening of oversight and enforcement of federal standards of care, recognizing that high standards of care, provided by the Nursing Home Reform Law of 1987, are meaningful when they are effectively enforced. The Nursing Home Transparency and Quality of Care Improvement Act updates and strengthens the enforcement provisions that have been in effect since 1995. It increases civil money penalties, adopts a provision from California law that authorizes civil money penalties up to \$100,000 for a violation that is a direct, proximate cause of a resident's death, and strengthens the government's ability to monitor facilities under common ownership. The Center's study of federal enforcement decisions in 2007, which documents the limited sanctions that are imposed for the most serious deficiencies, underscores the need for the legislation you introduce.

Recent takeovers of many nursing homes by private equity firms have raised significant public concerns about ownership of nursing homes. But, as the Nursing Home Transparency and Quality of Care Improvement Act recognizes, problems of transparency in ownership go far beyond private equity firms. Your bill will help ensure that the public, as well as the government agencies that pay so much of the nursing home costs and are responsible for enforcing the standards of care, actually know who owns and manages all nursing facilities.

The bill's provisions, among others, that improve information available to the public through *Nursing Home Compare*, strengthen transparency in facility expenditures, establish a standardized complaint form, protect residents and families who complain about problems, and ensure staffing accountability will go a long way to improving quality of care for residents.

We congratulate you on introducing this important legislation to improve transparency and accountability and look forward to working with your staff to see its enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Toby S. Edelman". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Toby S. Edelman